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ABSTRACT

This guidebook is intended to help state literacy leaders evaluate their states' progress in implementing five key strategies for establishing an integrated literacy system. Chapters are devoted to each of the following strategies: determine the dimensions of the literacy problem, set priorities and performance expectations, create quality criteria and performance standards, expand opportunities for learning, and promote professional development. Each chapter includes the following: a brief description of the strategy, a discussion of its role and importance in building an integrated adult learning system, information about how other states are considering or implementing the strategy, and questions to consider when applying information and strategies to a particular individual state. (MN)

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A Guidebook for State Literacy Leaders: Implementing an Integrated System for Meeting Adult Learning Needs

by Sondra Stein

The State Literacy Exchange
Center for Policy Research
National Governors' Association

The National Governors' Association, founded in 1908 as the National Governors' Conference, is the instrument through which the nation's Governors collectively influence the development and implementation of national policy and apply creative leadership to state issues. The association's members are the Governors of the fifty states, the commonwealths of the Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico, and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. The association has seven standing committees on major issues: Agriculture and Rural Development; Economic Development and Technological Innovation; Energy and Environment; Human Resources; International Trade and Foreign Relations; Justice and Public Safety; and Transportation, Commerce, and Communications. Subcommittees and task forces that focus on principal concerns of the Governors operate within this framework.

The association works closely with the administration and Congress on state-federal policy issues through its offices in the Hall of the States in Washington, D.C. The association serves as a vehicle for sharing knowledge of innovative programs among the states and provides technical assistance and consultant services to Governors on a wide range of management and policy issues.

The Center for Policy Research is the research and development arm of NGA. The center is a vehicle for sharing knowledge about innovative state activities, exploring the impact of federal initiatives on state government, and providing technical assistance to states. The center works in a number of policy fields, including agriculture and rural development, economic development, education, energy and environment, health, information management, social services, trade, training and employment, and transportation.

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The State Literacy Exchange was established through the generous support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Gannett Foundation. Housed in the Training and Employment Program of the National Governors' Association Center for Policy Research, the exchange is a central point of contact at the national level for state literacy efforts. It serves state literacy leaders, including Governors and their staffs, and supports states in the development and implementation of policies and programs to improve literacy levels in the United States.

By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Introduction

Every state has a different story to tell about how, when, and where programs were first established to promote literacy and basic skills in adults. Until recently, programs established under the Adult Education Act or under one of the national volunteer programs have provided the bulk of services. Over the past five years, however, other agencies have become involved in funding literacy services as awareness has spread about the need for literacy services among the groups they serve. Programs for residents of housing projects, immigrants and refugees, dislocated workers, applicants for publicly funded training programs, and welfare recipients are now sponsored by urban economic development agencies, state library boards, state Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) liaisons, and state welfare agencies.[1]

Because these efforts have been initiated by agencies with disparate constituencies, mandates, and procedures, they vary widely in their services, their goals for learners, and their methods for assessing progress. As a result, it is often difficult for them to figure out which program is best for them. State planners and policymakers have found it equally difficult to determine whether they are targeting resources where they are most needed. The escalating demands of civic and economic life have added an urgency to state efforts to teach adults basic literacy skills. This urgency is reflected in the timetable established in the national educational goal for adult literacy and lifelong learning. Every state shares the goal of a citizenry that possesses "the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." However, none can come close to achieving this goal by the year 2000 as long as the policy, program development, and funding decisions made by the dozens of public and private agencies involved in funding literacy and basic skills programs are not part of a coordinated plan. The only way states can meet adult literacy and basic skills needs is through such joint planning. Interagency collaboration, beginning with a common vision of what needs to be accomplished, can transform disparate service delivery mechanisms into an integrated system for meeting adult learning needs.

What would such a system look like? It must be comprehensive and integrated. It must embrace in a common policy framework the full continuum of literacy and basic skills programs, from low-level native and English language literacy efforts, to GED and advanced training readiness courses. And it must do so regardless of who sponsors or funds the programs—a local, state, or federal government entity, a nonprofit organization, or a for-profit entity. Within such a system, decisionmaking would be guided by a common set of goals and priorities aimed at addressing a defined set of problems. This common policy framework would provide the basis for integrating disparate systems for data collection, learner assessment, program evaluation, and provider accountability; it would require funding agencies to agree

upon key measures for success and to develop common definitions and consistent measures for program objectives, program quality standards, and learner characteristics and outcomes. A statewide system for training staff and providing technical assistance would support these standards. Most importantly, this integrated system would include mechanisms for periodically reviewing policies and programs to ensure that they are responsive to demographic, economic, and labor market changes, and that adults are getting the services they need.

A 1990 survey by the National Governors' Association (NGA) State Literacy Exchange revealed that every state is at a different stage in its efforts to frame and implement such an integrated adult learning system. Many have taken the important first step of forming a state leadership team that includes staff members from Governors' offices, relevant legislative committees, and agencies that fund literacy services or serve constituencies in need of such services. Many states also have developed mechanisms to ensure that the vision, goals, and planning efforts of this leadership team are informed by input from advocacy, research, and literacy provider groups, as well as business and labor.

The success of efforts to create an integrated system depends on the commitment of these key players to achieving a common goal. When commitment is high, turf is not an issue; instead, participants cooperate in building a common system, confident that their ability to serve their constituencies is strengthened by working together.

This series of regional meetings is intended to help state literacy leaders take the next steps toward establishing an integrated literacy system. The two-day meetings are structured to encourage an in-depth examination of the following strategies for developing such a system:

- Determining the dimensions of the literacy problem.
- Setting priorities and performance expectations.
- Creating quality criteria and performance standards.
- Expanding opportunities for learning.
- Promoting professional development. Sessions on the five strategies will include two formal presentations by state representatives, followed by a generous amount of time for discussion.

This guidebook was developed to help state literacy leaders evaluate their states' progress in implementing each of these five strategies. The paper provides a brief description of each of the five strategies, including a short introduction describing the strategy's role and importance in building an integrated adult learning system; information about how other states are thinking about and implementing the strategy; some questions to consider when applying information and strategies to your own state; and space to jot down your own thoughts and questions. We hope you find this a useful tool, both during the meeting and when the real work continues back home.

Strategy One: States Should Determine the Dimensions of the Literacy Problem.

When a state's interagency literacy team first meets, people share stories and problems. The representative from the state welfare agency is concerned about the need to reduce the state's welfare rolls. The corrections representative wants all of the inmates in his or her system to earn high school diplomas so that when they go out into the world they will have a better chance of surviving without resorting to criminal activity. Representatives from the vocational education and job training systems are concerned that too many of the people who come to them do not have the appropriate skills to qualify for vocational training programs. The representative from the economic development agency brings reports from employers who complain about not being able to find entry level workers with strong enough skills. Each agency has a different outlook on the literacy problem and its own perspective of which group of people needs which skills.

These perspectives are the starting point for determining the nature and extent of the state's literacy problem. They identify key groups of adults who are at risk for possessing inadequate basic skills. The problem statements also give some sense of where to look to determine what level of skills would be adequate. It is not possible for the leadership team to determine whether the state currently has the resources—or, indeed, what resources the state will need—to enable these key groups to gain the requisite skills without developing a more exact picture of the nature and the scope of its literacy problem.

There are three key steps in determining the dimensions of a state's literacy problem. They are:

- identifying the skills and knowledge necessary for adults to compete in the state's economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities and citizenship;
- identifying the actual skill levels of groups within the adult population and comparing these with what skill levels are necessary; and
- determining what resources are necessary to provide adults with the opportunity to gain the skills they need. There are efforts currently going on at the national level to determine the skills and knowledge necessary for adults to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The most prominent recent effort is the report issued by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS): *What Work Requires of Schools*. This report identifies five competencies upheld by a three-part foundation of basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities. Other noteworthy efforts to identify national

or state standards include: The External Diploma Program accredited by the American Council of Education, which concentrates on life skills as opposed to workplace skills; the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) developed in California and used to create a standard for GAIN, the state's JOBS program; and a number of other state standards, based on CASAS, developed through the Project of the States.

Since these standards tend to be based on surveys of key representative groups (employers, educators, community leaders), your state may choose to simplify its own process of determining necessary skills by beginning with one of these standards. You may choose to adopt it whole cloth, or to convene a group of industry and community leaders representative of your state to review the standard and adapt it to the conditions within your own communities.

Another model worth looking at, in this respect, is the Michigan Employability Profile, developed in 1988 by a private sector task force convened by the Governor. Once the state leadership team has a clear sense of the range of skills adults need, the next step is to determine the extent to which people deviate from that goal. The most accurate picture of the range of skills within the adult population and the number of adults functioning at each level can be obtained through a large-scale state-specific survey. Mississippi and Oregon have conducted such surveys; in both instances the state uncovered unexpected, useful information about the distribution of skills in the adult population. This information will enable them to target resources more carefully, focusing on groups with the greatest need and developing program models appropriate to meet those needs.[3]

Eleven other states (California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington) plan to participate in state-specific surveys as part of the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS). Participating in this survey will enable states to develop a profile of the literacy skills of their adult population that is comparable with the national sample and with other participating states. State that are not able to make the investment to participate may want to develop a mechanism for using proxy measures, such as those proposed by the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada. Alternatively, they may want to undertake a more narrowly focused survey, following the example of Puerto Rico, which in 1986 surveyed residents of fifty municipalities with the highest reported percentages of illiteracy to obtain a more accurate picture of the literacy problem in those areas. In 1989, Hawaii contracted with a private research firm to conduct a statewide literacy needs assessment. Comparing the skills that adults have with those they need enables policymakers to determine how much work needs to be done to achieve the adult literacy goal established by the nation's Governors. Once armed with information regarding the nature and scope of the literacy problem, state policymakers can better determine the resources necessary to solve the problem.

Planners might begin this third step by asking a theoretical question: How many adults would need literacy services each year, and how many hours of service would they ideally need, for the state to fulfill the national adult literacy goal? If, for example, 900,000 adults in the state need some degree of skill improvement, then you could say that a minimum of 100,000 adults would need to receive services each year.

Mississippi: Using a Large-Scale Literacy Assessment to Improve Services

During the spring and summer of 1990, the state of Mississippi conducted 1,803 individual household interviews of Mississippi adults between the ages of sixteen and seventy-five to determine the literacy proficiencies of this population. The survey instrument, developed by the Education Testing Service (ETS) and first used in a national literacy survey of young adults in 1985, utilizes simulated, open-ended tasks to assess literacy skills in three basic areas that capture the ways adults apply their basic skills:

- prose literacy—understanding and using information from texts, including editorials, news stories, and poems;
- document literacy—locating and using information contained in job applications or payroll forms, bus schedules, maps, tables, and indexes; and
- quantitative literacy—applying arithmetic operations embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form, or determining interest.

Some of the significant findings from the assessment include the following.

Mississippi has very few total nonreaders among its adult population—less than 2 percent of adults cannot sign their name on a Social Security card and more than 90 percent can read simple directions on a medicine bottle.

Those who experience the most problems with literacy are typically older and have had less formal education than those functioning at higher levels.

Mississippians in households that receive public assistance function at appreciably lower levels of proficiency than households that receive no public assistance.

Using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) measures of school-based reading ability, 35 percent of adults are reading below intermediate levels, meaning they will have difficulty searching for specific information, interrelating ideas, summarizing and explaining relatively complicated information, or learning from specialized reading materials.

The factors that are most clearly associated with literacy proficiency are educational attainment, race, and parents' education level.

Although measuring the state's progress in solving the literacy problem was the reason for Mississippi's literacy assessment, the information obtained from the study is also being used to improve literacy programs and policies. One example of this is Mississippi's efforts to use the information to shape performance standards and quality measures for the state's JOBS programs. Like other states with high rates of welfare dependency, Mississippi seeks to move AFDC recipients into decent jobs, specifically jobs that pay at least $6.00 an hour and have good benefits. The literacy assessment revealed that

AFDC recipients have an average literacy level of 230 on the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) scale, while adults in entry-level jobs with opportunities for advancement (clerical jobs, for instance) have an average literacy level of 280 to 285. The literacy assessment helped the state determine the skill level that welfare recipients should achieve in order to become economically self-sufficient.

Once this skill level has been quantified, Mississippi can establish clear performance standards for providers that reflect this goal. The performance standards might specify that providers of literacy services for AFDC recipients must help 70 percent of their program participants achieve this skill level within a nine-month period. They might also require use of the Test of Applied Literacy Skills to measure progress over time, since this assessment instrument uses the same scale as the NALS.

To ensure that the performance standards do not result in a service delivery network that serves only welfare recipients who are the most skilled, Mississippi will take action in two areas. First, the state will establish eligibility criteria that encourages providers to serve those with literacy skills at the low end of the spectrum. Second, the state will establish program guidelines and a technical assistance system that supports attainment of the state goal.

This number would have to be adjusted to account for the number of people in high-priority populations, the number within these targeted groups needing high-intensity services of long duration, and the number that are close to possessing necessary skills.[4] States would then have to depart from this ideal and consider available resources. How many adults are currently being served each year? What kinds of services are they getting? At what level of intensity? In order to develop current, accurate information about existing resources, state leadership teams may want to follow the example of Massachusetts and create an interagency survey instrument that allows them to establish a baseline inventory of the service delivery network. Or they may choose to emulate the New York Department of Education, which looked at patterns of existing services by examining multiple databases, including those of the state welfare agency, the JTPA and Refugee and Immigrant services, and the state education agency.

Once states have this information, they are in a position to compare existing resources with the needs uncovered by the assessment of adult skills. Are existing programs targeting the right populations? Are they addressing the actual needs of these populations?

State policymakers interested in taking a strategic approach to improving literacy skills in the adult population will want to base their planning on an accurate and thorough understanding of the nature and scope of the state's literacy problem. By ensuring that the instruments they use to measure each dimension of the literacy problem are as exact as possible, states ensure that their decisions about how to move forward are based on the fullest description of reality, and hence, are most likely to solve the problem.

Questions to think about:

Q: What signs are there that our state has a literacy problem? What groups are affected? Why? Do other problems appear to be related to the literacy problem? For Whom?

Q: What do we know about the dimensions of the literacy problem?

Dimension One: The Skills Adults Need

- What level of literacy is needed in the following environments:
  - The workplace?
  - The home?
  - The community?
  - Other key areas?
- How do we know what level of literacy is needed?

Dimension Two: The Skills Adults Have

- What groups are at risk? How do we know? How large is this at-risk group? What proportion of the population does it represent? Who cares about this group? What is the group's political collateral?
- What do we know about the literacy abilities of this group?
- What social and economic factors are associated with low literacy skills for this group?

Dimension Three: The Resources Needed to Address the Problem

- What resources are already being deployed that might help solve the problem? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this service delivery network?
- What additional resources will we need to meet the adult literacy goal?

Strategy Two: States Should Set Priorities and Performance Expectations.

Once policymakers have a clear picture of the dimensions of the state's literacy problem, they are ready to turn to the task of setting statewide goals and priorities. This is inherently a political undertaking. If there were a consensus across the highest levels of state government that achieving universal adult literacy was one of the state's three most important goals, state literacy leaders would not have to worry about how to frame their goal statement in order to gain support for solving the state's literacy problem.

But for most states, no such consensus exists. Although awareness about the critical importance of literacy has grown, thanks to the work of the National Education Goals Panel and the widely held belief that the United States cannot compete in a global economy unless we improve the literacy skills of our current and future workforce, the tight fiscal environment at both the federal and state level means that the need for literacy services must compete with many other important needs. Since resources for literacy are limited, we all must worry about the politics of setting state priorities and performance expectations.

Those of us who have been working on literacy policy and program development often talk about how literacy is the foundation for so many other benefits that the state wants to assure for its citizens. We understand the connection between learning how to read and feeling better about oneself. We know, too, how this empowerment increases the resources of families, strengthens communities, and prepares individuals for jobs that pay decent wages. Building political will for a literacy agenda requires no more and no less than communicating this message to others in such a way that they adopt literacy as one of the top three items on their own agenda.

Has the Governor defined economic development, education reform, welfare reform, or criminal justice reform as among his or her key goals? If so, you need to take these goals into account in framing your literacy goals. Make sure that the groups you prioritize for service include the unemployed, school dropouts, current welfare recipients, or inmates of the state's correctional system. Your outcome goals also need to reflect the Governor's priorities. For example, you might talk about enabling 90 percent of the adult population to gain the skills needed to build a stronger, more productive workforce. Or you might frame your goal in terms of enabling parents to develop the skills necessary to help their children succeed in school or enabling recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) assistance to develop the skills needed to move from dependency to self-sufficiency.

The Governor's priorities are not the only ones that need to be taken into account in building political will. You also need to be sure that your literacy goals and priorities address the concerns of each of the agencies participating in the state leadership team, of key constituencies such as business and labor, of human service advocacy groups, and of legislative leaders whose support you will need to obtain funding. By considering the interests of these key players as you translate needs into priorities and performance goals, you will increase the likelihood that literacy will get the attention it deserves. Let's take the example of building a strong workforce, a high-priority goal for both the public and private sectors in most states. The state literacy goal might be stated in terms of building the skills and knowledge necessary to gain and hold employment in the state's fastest growing industries. Through your determination of the dimensions of the problem, you will identify both what skills are requisite for a competitive workforce in these industries and which groups lack these skills. How do you choose which groups to prioritize for services? One consideration for your interagency team might be the ease with which funds can be obtained. If the state has a high rate of plant closings, hence access to federal Economic Assistance and Worker Adjustment Assistance (EDWAA) funds, and a high rate of welfare recidivism and access to Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Training funds, then the state literacy team will surely want to include dislocated workers and welfare recipients among the groups given priority to receive literacy services.

Another consideration might be gaining the support of key advocacy groups. If advocacy groups for senior citizens, Hispanics, or other populations with special needs identify literacy services as one of the key needs for their constituency, then prioritizing these groups for service will secure key external support for literacy.

Finally, if the state leadership team determines that new state resources are needed, then the level of skills prioritized and the timetable for showing progress might be adjusted to ensure that the Governor and the legislature see enough improvement to justify additional resources within the desired time frame.

Many states are in the process of refining state literacy goals in response to the national education goals. Although the substance of the goals varies from state to state, there is a common message from states as diverse as Indiana, Hawaii, Colorado, New York, and Illinois: The greatest resource for building political will is to build a state literacy team that is as inclusive as possible. The more constituencies, both public and private, that are invested in helping to shape the literacy agenda from the beginning, the more likely it will be that illiteracy will move to the center of the political stage.

Arkansas: An Action Plan for Literacy Enhancement

In 1987, the Governor's Commission on Adult Literacy was formed to significantly increase the literate population and the level of functional literacy in Arkansas. During their first year of existence, the commission studied the state's literacy system to determine how services were being delivered. In 1988, the commission released the Arkansas Action Plan for Literacy Enhancement, which included five goals—realistic and reachable benchmarks to justify significant increases in resources. The goals are:

- Increase the number of people enrolled in literacy enhancement programs to 100,000 by 1994.
- Develop objectives for those enrolled in literacy enhancement programs and implement tracking to measure achievement.
- Quadruple the involvement of the private sector through donations of money, manpower, facilities, and an increase in workplace literacy programs.
- Establish a unified statewide literacy effort involving private (literacy councils and individual councils) and public (adult education) organizations.
- Establish Arkansas as a national leader in addressing the problems of adult literacy.

The action plan also included fifteen strategies and recommendations for achieving the goals. These included reorganizing Arkansas' Division of Vocational and Technical Education to place greater emphasis on adult education and literacy; implementing a statewide funding and support drive with the private sector to increase their investment in the state's literacy efforts; significantly expanding workplace literacy efforts in the state; developing programs and incentives within the criminal justice system to improve the literacy skills of incarcerated populations; developing plans to address the special needs of the learning disabled; and implementing pilot projects that utilize state stipends to pay for dependent care and transportation for adults participating in adult education and literacy programs.

The *1991 Annual Report of the Governor's Commission on Adult Literacy* documents some of the progress that has been made toward achieving the state goals. For instance, the Arkansas State Legislature has appropriated an additional $12 million over the next two years for adult literacy (an increase of 78 percent), funding for the Governor's Commission on Adult Literacy has been authorized, and more than $500,000 has been appropriated over the next two years to support work by private industry councils. In addition, student enrollment in Arkansas increased 12 percent over the previous year and 63.9 percent since 1987, an institutional/correctional grant program was developed and implemented, and the number of certified tutors in the state significantly increased. Progress was also made in other areas, including workplace literacy and public awareness. As Arkansas now turns its full attention to achieving results, the goal of 100,000 adults enrolled in literacy programs seems attainable.

Questions to think about:

Dimension One: Priority Service Groups

- Is there correspondence between the findings of the literacy team regarding the nature and scope of the state's literacy problem and the Governor's key priorities?
- How do the findings relate to the needs of constituencies served by agencies represented on the leadership team?
- Of constituencies represented by strong advocacy groups?
- Of constituencies strongly supported by the state's legislative leaders?

Dimension Two: Performance Goals

- How can the outcome goals for literacy for these high-priority groups be stated so as to address the following:
  - The Governor's priorities?
  - The mandates of state agencies and federal funding sources?
  - The goals of key advocacy groups?
  - The policy priorities of the legislative leadership?
  - The priorities of business and labor groups?

Strategy Three: States Should Create Accountability Systems that Ensure Quality Programs and Establish Clear Performance Standards for All Providers.

As the discussion among leadership team members moves from goals and priorities to performance standards and quality measures, the mood inevitably changes. Reaching consensus about vision—what it's important to achieve—is so much easier than reaching consensus about how to make that vision a reality. Every agency represented at the table understands that goals and priorities must be translated into performance standards and quality measures that drive service delivery if the state is to make any real progress. And, if they've gotten this far, presumably every agency has a significant investment in achieving those goals—in making a real difference for people with literacy problems. At the same time, however, each state agency has its own set of performance standards; these are usually tied to federal programs like JTPA or JOBS. And while states do have flexibility in how they apply federal performance standards, once an agency has decided on its approach and established a management information system to collect and analyze data from the field, it is hard to make changes. Layers of bureaucracy and mountains of paperwork seem to stand in the way of the interagency team wishing to take the next step forward and create a framework for accountability that will enable the team to measure progress across agencies and will, as a by-product, integrate disparate systems for data collection on clients and client outcomes.

There are three major questions that states seek answers to when they set up accountability systems:

- Are we reaching the groups within our state that have the greatest need (or the groups that we have defined in our goals as our key target populations)?
- Are literacy and basic skills programs in the state really helping these adults by giving them the skills they need to achieve their own goals for a better life, including personal, work, family, and community-related goals?
- Are there program models that are particularly effective in enabling adults to gain the literacy skills they need? Not surprisingly, these are the questions that states and the federal government are directed to find answers to in the National Literacy Act, signed into law on July 25, 1991. Under this law, state education agencies are required to evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs and to "determine which programs shall receive assistance" on the basis of "success of the grant recipient in recruiting, retaining, and assisting participants in reaching desired literacy goals and obtaining subsequent work experience." To make this deter-

mination in an equitable way, state education agencies will have to develop statewide measures for learner recruitment, retention, and progress.

There is nothing in the legislation that requires state education agencies to work with other state agencies to develop common definitions and common measures in these areas. However, there are a number of factors that would incline state education agencies to choose this collaborative approach, including the focus in Title I of the literacy act on interagency collaboration at the national level and the widespread concern among states to use literacy and job training dollars in the most cost-effective and efficient manner. To accomplish this, states facilitate the creation of a seamless continuum of services that makes it possible for an adult to move easily and directly from literacy and basic skills classes to job training and GED to employment without regard for what agency funds the service and without providers having to go through what the Illinois plan describes as a "confusing tangle of applications, rules, regulations, and paperwork." The national education goals simply add another incentive in this direction since Governors cannot look across all departments to see what progress the state is making toward its education goals unless all education and training agencies define and measure accountability cooperatively, using common definitions and consistent frameworks.

Once having made the commitment to work together there are a number of approaches state leadership teams can take to creating an interagency, and in some cases a public-private, framework for accountability. Literacy leaders in several states have found that it is best to proceed "target-group-by-target-group," having agencies with an investment in a common priority group work out a set of standards and procedures to guide service to that group. Helping welfare recipients make the transition to economic self-sufficiency has been a good starting place for many states (see the section on Mississippi's experiences for an example of how goals and priorities can be translated into performance standards). First, this is a goal every Governor can embrace; getting people off welfare reduces state costs and enhances economic opportunity.

Second, WIN demonstration projects in many states—most notably California's GAIN program and Massachusetts"s ET: Choices program—have established a tradition of cooperation between state agencies that assist welfare recipients achieve economic independence. Finally, JOBS programs provide an opportunity for collaboration in this area since every state must submit a plan in order to qualify for reimbursement under JOBS, and the plan must include provisions for accountability and proof of coordination between the state welfare agency and the state education agency. While the JOBS program does not mandate the degree of coordination between the education, JTPA, and welfare agencies, its emphasis on approved standards means that agencies that fail to participate in interagency planning will have no voice in shaping the standards to which it will be held accountable.

Even with the strongest incentives, committed leadership is necessary to bring state agencies for education, JTPA, and public welfare together to agree on common definitions and consistent measures in three critical areas:

- learner recruitment and retention;
- learner progress, including agreement on what constitutes progress (e.g., knowledge and skills gained, changes in self-esteem, improvements in family and community life) and what tools and processes should be used for measuring progress; and
- program quality, including what constitutes effective service for this client group.

States that have taken this target group approach hope to use their experiences with welfare clients as a model for interagency collaboration across the whole system. If the approach seems to work for providers and state agencies (that is, if providers stop complaining about having to track clients six different ways for six different agencies and agencies find it easier to keep track of which providers and which approaches to providing services are the most effective), there is a good chance that a state leadership team will be able to build upon this success and test the new framework across multiple groups. Ultimately, the team will succeed in creating a system for measuring progress toward the state's goals.

While a number of states have adopted this target group approach as the least threatening way to test joint accountability systems, this is not the only approach that has been tried or that works. The factors that seem to affect what particular approach a state uses include:

- who takes leadership to bring multiple agencies together, and what their strengths, weaknesses, and interests are;
- which systemic needs seem to be most pressing at a particular time; and
- what other situational forces (a change in leadership in a key agency, for example, or a legislative requirement of some sort) support interagency collaboration.

The CASAS system represented the confluence in California in the early 1980s of a good working relationship between the heads of two state agencies (JTPA and adult education) with recognition of a common need (a competency-based assessment system for adult learners that would facilitate the transition of adults from one system to another). The fact that there was a need, no federal or state mandates preventing it, and a good relationship created a set of conditions that favored the development of a single assessment system as a starting point for statewide accountability.

The decision of the Massachusetts Interagency Literacy Group to develop a set of "Guidelines for Effective Literacy and Basic Skills Programs" was also influenced by a desire to create common ground in a place where turf was uncontested and few federal or state standards existed. The group had already established a goal of moving toward a more unified funding process in which state agencies would respond to regionally devised literacy plans. Developing common definitions and common agreement on what components are critical for effective literacy programs established an important foundation for this movement. At a time when a shift in administration was imminent, the articulation and broad dissemination of a

Florida: Toward Accountability in Literacy

Increased accountability in Florida's educational system is the foundation for its integrated literacy system. Accountability in education is necessary to ensure that vital programs retain their applicability, receive investment from the legislature, and obtain the commitment of the community. Increased accountability in the field of literacy also is conducive to a more responsive adult learning system.

Cold hard facts about the relationship between literacy and the lives of Floridians initially shocked the state into action. Seventy-five percent of high school dropouts in Florida live in poverty. Seventy-five percent of those in Florida's prisons are functionally illiterate. In addition, approximately 900 people a day, with varied educational backgrounds, move into Florida.

Florida responded with the Florida Adult Literacy Policy Academy Team, which was formed to develop state literacy policies. The team includes members from each of the state's agencies interested in adult literacy and a representative from the volunteer sector. The most important vehicle for this was the creation of two pieces of legislation—The Adult Literacy Act and the Adult Literacy Plan of 1987. The plan sets the literacy goals for the state; requires that all sixty-seven counties submit a literacy plan; and addresses such issues as family literacy, utilization of volunteers, coordination of efforts with libraries, class size, and other guidelines. In 1991 workforce education issues were also included.

While 435,540 adult literacy students were served by Florida's local education agencies and volunteer organizations in 1990, adult education had not previously been an integral component of Florida communities' education goals. A lack of awareness existed about the intricate relationship between functional adults and children who graduate high school, the link between functional adults and the increase in workforce production, or the relationship between functional adults and juveniles who did not enter jail.

This year Florida has taken the first steps in creating a system that is accountable to the entire community. Known as the Accountability Act, this legislation pinpoints seven goals that the state "as a whole" will work toward. The seventh goal refers to adult literacy: "Adult Floridians are literate and have the knowledge and skills needed to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship."

The legislation is comprehensive and mandates establishment of the following elements:

- Broad state-level goals;
- Outcome measures tied to standards;
- Core learning proficiencies;
- Needs assessment/public disclosure mechanisms; and
- Improved training and staff development programs.

Each of the more than 2,000 schools in Florida must address each of the seven goals, including adult literacy, through a school improvement plan. Although this legislation recently passed (spring of 1991), every school in Florida has already completed a needs assessment and needs response plan. These reports have been compiled into district reports that highlight major needs and accomplishments.

Throughout the fall, members of the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability traveled the state. The commission surveyed the state through school visits and open forums in every district. The group is scheduled to report to the legislature in early 1992. Based on their recommendations, schools—with guidance from the state education agency—will develop school improvement plans for implementation in 1993-94.

The benefits of this process for adult literacy programs are significant. First, while literacy is a "hot issue" today, this effort ensures that it will remain in the forefront for the foreseeable future in Florida. Second, many people in the public school system who had never considered the issues associated with adult literacy will now be legislatively encouraged to address the problem. Also significant will be the findings of the commission and their directives. It will be at that point that needed adjustments will be made to Florida's State Literacy Plan.

statewide set of standards also provided a mechanism for institutionalizing progress in interagency collaboration.

As all of these examples illustrate, a statewide framework for accountability does not come into existence overnight. Even though everyone agrees on the importance of a consistent method for measuring progress and a simplified reporting and accountability system for local providers, no one will accept a system introduced by fiat. Creating a coherent statewide system for translating vision into reality is a slow process. It requires trust between state agencies, and a willingness to share accountability and risk. For the system to work, each agency must be committed to the vision of a literate society—and to the intricate process of creating and testing measures, standards, and definitions.

Questions to think about:

What is the logical starting point in my state for developing a framework for common accountability?

Dimension One: A Target Group Approach

- Who needs to be involved?
- What are the incentives for collaboration?
- What are the barriers to collaboration?

Dimension Two: An Assessment Tool Approach

- Who needs to be involved?
- What are the incentives for collaboration?
- What are the barriers to collaboration?

Dimension Three: A Quality Standards Approach

- Who needs to be involved?
- What are the incentives for collaboration?
- What are the barriers to collaboration?

17 Strategy Three: States should create accountability systems that ensure quality programs and establish clear performance standards for all

Strategy Four: States Should Expand Opportunities for Learning.

There is not a state in this nation that finds itself in the position of having sufficient high-quality literacy and basic skills programs to meet the needs of its adult population. All of us need to expand opportunities for learning, moving into new communities and testing new program models in an effort to more effectively and efficiently reach those most in need. Too often, however, new programs for "family literacy" and "workplace literacy" seem more like flavors of the month in a national advertising campaign than program choices carefully made as part of a comprehensive effort to build an ongoing literacy and basic skills service delivery system.

There is really only one good reason for initiating a new program: to fill a gap in appropriate services to a group that the state literacy team considers a high priority. Since every state has some literacy services, the emphasis here needs to be on the word "appropriate." The specifics of what constitutes appropriate service will be different for every group.

Let's return to our earlier example of welfare recipients in Mississippi to explore one approach to developing an appropriate model. Mississippi's survey of literacy skill levels revealed that AFDC recipients will have to gain an average of 50 to 55 points on the NALS scales in document and quantitative literacy in order to qualify for jobs that pay $6.00 an hour and have good benefits. Mississippi literacy experts assume that adults will need an average of 400 to 500 hours of time-on-task to achieve this goal. After investigating its existing service delivery network, Mississippi discovered that the primary program model available is one-on-one tutoring, with an average intensity of four hours time-on-task per learner per week. Obviously this model does not meet federal JOBS requirements. Furthermore, if Mississippi were to rely on this model to deliver services to welfare recipients, it would take a minimum of two years for the average AFDC recipient to develop the skills necessary to qualify for gainful employment.

To reach its goal more quickly, Mississippi must establish a new program model that is not only appropriate to the literacy goals for this target population, but that maximizes success in a number of other ways, as well. One of the findings of the Mississippi statewide survey was that two-thirds of all respondents were involved in informal peer networks for giving and receiving assistance in literacy tasks. By including small group instruction as part of the state program model, Mississippi's program designers could take advantage of this preferred style of learning. Moreover, such an approach would reinforce a mode of team problemsolving that is appropriate to the workplace. Once the state has fashioned a program model that is appropriate to the target population, it is responsible for providing appropriate

Hawaii: An Integrated Asset Learning System

Hawaii's comprehensive state literacy program was initiated in 1987 under the leadership of Governor John Waihee and First Lady Lynne Waihee. The Governor's vision for literacy was to bring all segments of Hawaiian society together in partnership to accept responsibility for meeting the educational needs of each community through individual commitment and collaborative action. This vision has been realized through the establishment of the Governor's Council for Literacy, with representation from state and local government, business, labor, media, and the service providers of literacy and English as a Second Language.

Hawaii's "integrated asset" approach is based on building strong partnerships to address state and community needs and focusing on problems as assets to build on, rather than deficiencies to dwell on. This approach has been especially successful in Hawaii in enhancing community literacy, workplace literacy, and family literacy.

The foundation for community literacy efforts in Hawaii was laid in 1990 with the establishment of the Office of Children and Youth's (OCY) Literacy Island Liaison Project, in accordance with state legislation. The project has three primary components.

- *Literacy Island Liaisons* are contracted representatives of OCY on each of the islands of Hawaii. Their tasks include identifying all active literacy programs and resources in each community and collecting data on program activity and assistance in collaboration with the island's literacy coalition. These liaisons work directly with the county literacy coalitions and support the county-level recommendations for literacy.
- *The Governor's Council for Literacy HOTLINE* is housed in OCY and staffed by a VISTA volunteer. The hotline provides efficient responses to literacy requests, including student and tutor referrals to community level agencies.
- *The Outreach Project* is an effort to identify rural communities' literacy needs using information provided by the Literacy Island Liaisons. This needs analysis is then shared with the liaisons who work directly with existing community resources to develop appropriate literacy projects for the community.

Educational institutions and business and labor have worked in close collaboration in Hawaii to develop effective workplace literacy programs. One model program, Project S.U.C.C.E.S.S (Sheraton's Unified Commitment Concerning Employee's Self-Success), is a partnership between ITT Sheraton Hotels and the University of Hawaii to incorporate academic expertise into the target-based, results-oriented training of the business environment. Established in 1988, this program has provided instruction to more than 500 employees, and has received its second federal grant to expand to three new sites. The University of Hawaii - Community Colleges also are working with business and labor throughout the state to provide a variety of workplace literacy programs to employed adults.

Family literacy in Hawaii is supported primarily by Family Literacy Pilot Programs at the state level and the Hawaii Fund for Family Literacy at the community level. In 1990 OCY initiated three pilot family literacy programs that are funded by the state legislature. These programs are based on the Kenan Model Family Literacy Programs, developed by the National Center for Family Literacy. In 1990 the Hawaii Fund for Family Literacy was established to assist organizations in developing and implementing family literacy projects. The fund—initially supported by the Hawaii Community Foundation, Aloha United Way, and Hawaii's labor unions—has committed more than $1.5 million, including large contributions from the state legislature, the business sector, labor unions, and foundation funds. As of September 1991, the fund has approved thirty-six grants for start-up or seed dollars for the purpose of adding intergenerational literacy components to existing educational or social service programs.

In three years, the Governor's Council for Literacy has made significant progress in expanding the opportunities for adults in Hawaii to learn basic skills. With an eye to the future, the council's plans include establishing standards for effective literacy programs, expanding training efforts for community development, combining workplace and family literacy programs, and incorporating economic development opportunities into existing family literacy programs.

Mississippi: Accessing Funds to Build Capacity in Adult Literacy

From 1988 through 1991, then-Governor Ray Mabus and First Lady Julie Mabus of Mississippi made a strong personal commitment to adult education. Supported by their leadership, Mississippi made progressive strides in the development of literacy policy and implementation of innovative literacy programs. To ensure that resources were available to build the capacity of adult education and literacy services, the state utilized a variety of funding sources.

1. Adult Education Funds from the U.S. Department of Education
   - In 1989, a portion of funds was used for teaching job-related basic skills training to the National Guard based on curriculum taught to U.S. enlisted men in Europe.
   - Section 353 funds were used to support the Skills Enhancement Program, the state's workplace literacy program.
2. Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) 8% Education Funds from the U.S. Department of Labor (specifically prioritized by the Governor for literacy purposes)
   - Approximately $3 million was used to fund cost-effective, accountable local literacy programs.
   - Funding was provided for model programs and public/private partnerships such as the Job Skills Enhancement Program (JSEP), the Mississippi Mobile Learning Lab, and family literacy programs.
   - Funding was provided for effective training programs for adult education instructors and administrators.
3. The Basic Skills Income Tax Credit for Employers (Mississippi was the first state in the nation to legislate a tax incentive for the private sector to offer basic skills training for employee upgrade and training.)
4. Wagner Peyser 7(b) Funds from the U.S. Department of Labor
   - Approximately $700,000, earmarked by the Governor for worker training, was used to fund the statewide literacy assessment (see Strategy One), the Commission on Workforce Excellence, and the state's skills enhancement program.
5. Mississippi Literacy Foundation
   - Founded by former First Lady Julie Mabus, this private nonprofit foundation funds innovative literacy programs and support activities. The foundation also funded other initiatives such as the development of the Commercial Driver's License Curriculum to assist adults in passing the 1992 test. The foundation also sponsored the state's first annual adult learner's conference.
6. National Literacy Grants
   - In 1989-90, Mississippi was one of thirty-two states awarded a National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The state developed and tested innovative workplace literacy techniques and trained a cadre of individuals in conducting literacy task analyses at the workplace.

funding and technical assistance necessary for providers to implement the new model.

Establishing a formative evaluation framework and training providers in how to use it will ensure that the state team gets usual feedback on the effectiveness of the model. State literacy leaders should aim for this kind of fit between every new program model they propose and the overall system they envision for meeting the state's literacy needs. Whether a state is adding a workplace literacy initiative or a program for the homeless, a citizenship education program for immigrants or a

family literacy program as part of Even Start, the driving force in creating the model should be the need to provide appropriate services for priority groups whose needs are not adequately met by existing services.

Insofar as state program models are linked to the effort to develop a comprehensive system, they can also serve to upgrade the system as a whole. In several states, workplace literacy models have been used to test new contextual learning models, new performance assessment systems, and new customized program strategies with the goal of applying the lessons learned to the broader service delivery network. Building in substantial formative and summative evaluation mechanisms completes the demonstration/research loop, providing the team with the information it needs to improve service delivery for every target population and enabling the state to make substantial progress toward its goal of a fully literate population.

Questions to think about:

Q: To what extent does the existing service delivery network help you meet goals for priority groups?

- For each group, consider whether appropriate services exist.

Q: For which priority groups do you need to develop new program models to ensure appropriate services?

- For each group, identify key characteristics or factors that need to be taken into account in developing appropriate services.
- For each model, identify key features that you believe will respond to these key characteristics.
- For each model, identify proposed feedback mechanisms for formative and summative evaluation.

Strategy Five: States Should Promote Professional Development Systems for Staff and Volunteers of All State-Financed Programs.

There are two primary obstacles to creating new, more effective literacy program models. The first is a lack of money. The second is inadequately trained staff. Just as state agencies are accustomed to doing things their own way, so are literacy providers. If teachers—whether paid or volunteer—are not given the opportunity and incentives to try new approaches, inertia and fear will keep them locked into old ways of doing things. It is not enough for state policymakers to have a vision of what they want to accomplish and new standards for effective literacy instruction; they must also invest in a professional development system that communicates these new standards and prepares volunteers and paid staff to implement them.

It is important to note the strong, intrinsic connection between developing teachers' skills and strategies for setting priorities and performance goals, building accountability systems, and expanding opportunities for learning. Professional development does not simply require that every literacy volunteer and staff member receive a certain number of continuing education credits per year. It has as little to do with the eclectic smorgasbord approach to gaining new skills and knowledge as the kind of goal-oriented, contextually based adult learning models we have been discussing have to do with generic school-based literacy or basic skills programs.

Viewed as a system-building strategy, professional development can be thought of as a system within a system. Its goal is to enable all adult basic skills and literacy teachers to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to prepare adults to participate in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. In order to achieve this goal, the state literacy team must go through a process similar to the one described for addressing the state's literacy problem. The team must begin by asking:

- "What are the dimensions of this problem?"
- "What skills and knowledge do literacy and basic skills instructors need in order to teach adults effectively?"
- "What skills and knowledge do they have?"
- "What resources do we need to address these gaps in knowledge and skills?"

Once the dimensions of the problem are clear, it is time to set goals and priorities for teacher education, to develop new models for expanding opportunities for learning, and to establish an accountability system that is based on how well teachers are helping adults achieve their learning goals. In these ways, the staff

development system is reflexive of the state's integrated adult learning system as well as being instrumental to the creation of that system.

Building a well-defined professional development system is a step-by-step developmental process. Where you start depends on the specific circumstances in your state: where the most serious gaps and weaknesses in the service delivery network lie; which agency is leading the effort; and what resources are available for meeting the needs. In Massachusetts, the Commonwealth Literacy Campaign (CLC) brought an infusion of new dollars into the adult literacy system. The provider community wanted to use the money to enhance the existing network, whereas the Governor had stipulated that the funds be used to develop a volunteer corps. CLC leaders resolved this conflict by hiring experienced ABE and ESL teachers to be curriculum developers and trainers for a new regional, participant-centered ABE and ESL volunteer training system.

By participating in the process and becoming trainers, the teachers broadened their own skills and knowledge—participating in peer learning exchanges with other expert teachers to learn new approaches to teaching reading and writing, new techniques for teaching and training, and to expand their skills in curriculum development.

In California, where the state had a history of using its Adult Education Act (AEA) - Section 353 funds for large-scale projects, the stimulus for staff development came from the exponential growth in the number of adults needing native language literacy, English-as-a-Second-Language courses, and ESL literacy. To respond to this need, the state established an ESL teacher training Institute to create a cadre of trained ESL teachers in every region of the state.

Other states, including Arkansas, Tennessee, and Texas have taken advantage of the resources provided through the U.S. Department of Education's National Diffusion Network (NDN). These states have recruited trainers from NDN-accredited models, including the Bronx Educational Services model for group instruction for low-literate adults and the PACE model for family literacy, focusing staff development on areas where they are interested in expanding opportunities for experiential learning.

With the passage of the National Literacy Act, it is likely that more resources will become available for states to implement comprehensive staff development efforts. States will be better prepared to use these funds if they begin now to think about how to create a professional development system that serves the state's goal of enhancing literacy and lifelong learning for adults.

Questions to think about.

Q: What do I know about the strengths and weaknesses of the adult literacy workforce in my state?

- Who makes up the adult literacy workforce?
- How large is this workforce?
- What percent of this workforce is full time? Part time? What percent is paid? Volunteer?

- What professional training has this workforce received to prepare them for the work they do?
- According to your assessment, is this training adequate to meet their current responsibilities? According to their own assessment? According to the assessment of their supervisors? According to the assessment of their students?
- How appropriate is their training to the goals, priorities, and performance standards established as part of the state's literacy plan?
- What incentives may be necessary to encourage this workforce to improve their skills and knowledge?

Q: What efforts have been made in the past five to ten years to promote professional development within the state?

- What can I learn from these efforts about how to develop a professional development system in the state?
- How can I build on these efforts?

Q: How can I involve the broadest possible sample of the adult literacy workforce in the design, development, and implementation of this system?

25 Strategy Five: States should promote professional development systems for staff and volunteers of all state-financed programs.

Conclusion

By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

The strategies explored on the preceding pages can be instrumental in attaining the national adult literacy and lifelong learning goal. They are like steps in a staircase or rungs on a ladder. As each strategy is implemented, states move closer to achieving the well-functioning, integrated adult learning system they need to achieve that goal. It is easy, especially in a process as complex as this one, to get stuck on one step. It is easy to lose sight of what one is trying to accomplish. It is critical for all members of the team to work together and essential to begin and end with a reminder to evaluate all efforts in terms of achieving that goal.

Endnotes

1. The term "literacy and basic skills" is intended to be as inclusive as possible. While most people are comfortable using the definition of literacy developed by ETS for NAEP and NALS ("the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential") some prefer to differentiate between literacy, ESL, ABE, and ASE (US DOE program categories) when discussing programs and funding sources. To accommodate the full range of meanings, the phrase "literacy and basic skills" will be used throughout this paper.

2. See Glossary for information on how to find out more about these standards. The Michigan Employability Profile was developed by a private sector taskforce convened by Governor Blanchard's Commission on Jobs and Economic Development in 1987. Copies of the Profile are available from the State Literacy Exchange. Information on CASAS and the CASAS-based Project of the States can be obtained from: Patricia Rickard, Director, CASAS, 2725 Congress Street, #1 M, San Diego, CA 92110, 619-298-4681 or Lori Strumpf, Center for Remediation Design, 1201 New York Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20005. Information on SCANS can be obtained from Arnold Packer, Director, U.S. DOL, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Room C-2318, Washington, DC 20210, 202-523-4840. Information on ETS' work can be obtained from Irwin Kirsch, Director of Research, Literacy Learning and Assessment Group, ETS, Princeton, NJ 08541, 609-734-1516. Information on the External Diploma Program can be obtained from Florence Harvey, Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036.

3. Both states have issued reports documenting their findings.

4. See discussion on prioritizing target populations under Strategy II.